1

Climate Problematics

Introduction

Climate change now needs little introduction. Through the production
of scientific assessments, the gathering of international politicians,
the iconography of environmental campaigns, commercial arenas from
advertising hoardings to supermarket aisles, an impressive array of art
forms, vernacular discourse surrounding everything from the weather
to the price of gas and the insertion of new infrastructures across our
urban and rural landscapes, climate change makes its presence felt.
Climate change has gathered an ephemeral sense of ubiquity, highly
(geographically and politically) uneven, dispersed yet somehow central-
ised, everywhere and at the same time difficult to locate. Its status as the
wicked environmental problem sine qua non is seemingly unassailable,
attracting sustained resources from across research, practitioner and
policy communities, the attention of the world's media and (at least
some of) the public. At the same time, a legion of potential solutions
to the rising levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases and the impacts of
the consequent changing climate have been proposed, from new inter-
national institutions, alternative financial allocations, innovative policy
instruments, technologies, plans, resilient infrastructures, forms of
behavioural change and so on and so forth. Indeed, most of the academic
literature on the governing of climate change is concerned with such
problem-solving interventions, their design, implementation, economies
and politics.

Whilst much has been revealed about the nature and implications of
climate change starting from this point, its diagnosis as an environmental
problem and the concomitant responses offered are also problematic.
Within the discipline of geography, questions of the environment have

1

occupied a central if sometimes uneasy position. Despite the growing recognition since the wave of new environmentalism in the 1960s that matters of the environment are also acutely political, economic, social and cultural, 'the tendency to label some issues as "environmental" and others as "economic", "cultural" or whatever . . . dies hard' (Castree 2002: 358). The result, as Karen O'Brien argues, is that 'human geographers [and other social scientists] have failed to shift the focus of the scientific discourse away from "the environment" as the problem and towards an integrated understanding of [societal] change based on critical research on space, place, politics, power, culture identities, emotions, connections, and so on' (O'Brien 2012: 593–4). There are growing calls for an increased engagement of the social sciences in global environmental change research and policy processes designed to bring some traction to addressing climate change. Yet these largely remain committed to a paradigm in which society can be understood as responding to problems taking place in a separate biophysical world and where issues of power and inequality are subsumed by more practical considerations of how to design appropriate institutional, market or behavioural responses (Castree et al. 2014; Head & Gibson 2012; Swyngedouw 2010).

This book argues that to engage with climate change in alternative ways that acknowledge 'the inconsistencies and ambiguities that stalk the phrase' (Brace & Geoghegan 2010: 285), the multiplicity of meanings, forms and relations to which it gives rise, and its radical nature, requires that we start from a different place. Many different starting points are available, and work across the social sciences is beginning to explore these avenues and the new directions for thinking about climate change that they provide, from issues of security to those of emotion, the ethics of care and questions of daily practice. This book begins with one such entry point: the matter of climate change's politics. This is far from virgin territory, largely occupied by the disciplines of international relations and political science, with their concerns for the design of international institutions and the nature of national politics (Bulkeley & Newell 2015). Here, for the most part, climate change is treated as an object, a biophysical condition, to which various social entities – actors, institutions, policies – respond. Yet if we take the perspective that such a priori divisions between the social and natural are themselves subject to question, as is now commonly accepted across the discipline of geography and beyond, attention necessarily shifts to the ways in which climate change comes

to be made political and how, in turn, political conditions are made in relation to climate change.

Central to these dynamics has been the matter of how climate change has come to be governed – of how climate governance is accomplished. Governing is not the only set of political conditions to which climate change gives rise and through which it comes to be constituted. There are, for example, forms of violence, security and conflict configured in relation to climate change. Yet the question of by what means and by whom climate change should be governed has preoccupied analysts and policy makers alike. Entering into this domain of inquiry, this book takes these questions in a different direction. Rather than considering governance as a matter of actors and institutions, it starts from the analysis of governing as the orchestration of distinct modes of power and seeks to explore the workings, politics and geographies of its operation (Allen 2003; Bulkeley 2012). Governing is itself a multivalent concept. Its familiar sense, associated with the organisation of modern democratic states, can be traced back to its roots as captured by Hobbes in *Leviathan*, where the term 'to govern' was articulated as the capacity 'to rule with authority, that is to rule with some basis' (Dean 2007: 36). Yet an alternative interpretation of governing can also be traced to classical political thought. As Dean (2007: 36) argues, a second, now more obscure, use of the term was also advanced by Hobbes, in *Behemoth*, as any 'practice that more or less deliberately seeks to direct, guide, or control others, for example, children, subjects, wives, a congregation, even livestock, and so forth'. It is from this sense of governing that Foucault's formulation of government as the 'conduct of conduct' is also derived. Tracing multiple sources of the term, Foucault argues that before it acquired its particular political connotations in the sixteenth century governing had broad connotations. Indeed, he suggests that in the writing of the time:

'to govern' covers a very rich semantic domain in which it refers to movement in space, material subsistence, diet, the care given to an individual . . . and also to the exercise of command, of a constant, zealous, active and always benevolent prescriptive activity. It refers to the control one may exercise over oneself and others, over someone's body, soul and behavior. And finally it refers to an intercourse, to a circular process or process of exchange between one thing and another. . . . through all these meanings . . . one never governs a state, a territory or a political structure. Those whom one governs are people, individuals, or groups (Foucault 2009: 122).

Foucault's writings and associated works on governmentality provide a rich set of conceptual resources through which to examine what governing entails and, critically, how it is accomplished. Drawing on these perspectives, this book aims to move beyond an account of climate change as an issue to be governed and instead asks how it comes to be constituted as requiring intervention, how this is mobilized, sustained and contested. This introduction sets out the ways in which the governing of climate change has commonly been conceived and how a focus on governing as an accomplishment can bring to bear new insight. The chapter then turns to consider what such perspectives might entail for examining the politics and geographies of climate governance before introducing the remaining chapters of the book.

Governing the Globe?

As climate change has come to be a matter not only of scientific but of political concern, a growing academic literature has addressed the question of its governance. Largely derived from international relations accounts of the means by which states cooperate and how non-state actors are able to shape the governing of global affairs, a rich seam of research has revealed the multilevel, multi-actor and multi-issue nature of climate change governance. Yet such work often tends to bypass the more fundamental questions of why, how and with what effects governing takes place. Alternative perspectives, gathered from an eclectic set of traditions in social sciences that can broadly be labelled as critical political and social theory, because of their disposition to open up taken-for-granted concepts and positions, provide a different set of entry points based on an account of power that is able to examine the relational, material and contested nature of governing. From this perspective, understanding the nature of climate governance requires that we attend to how it is accomplished and contested across a diverse array of sites and arenas.

Towards Global Governance

The now commonplace framing of climate change as a global problem requiring collective solutions owes its roots to the emergence of the climate change agenda in the late 1980s as one requiring an international scientific and policy response (Paterson 1996). Conceived as one of

several global environmental issues requiring international action, climate change came to be regarded as problem of the atmospheric commons that required new institutions capable of managing the challenge of ensuring effective action. During the 1990s, analysis of the politics of climate change was subsequently dominated by accounts of the formation of international regimes and the ways in which nation-states and other actors, from scientific communities to nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and business interests, were able to effectively shape and direct global climate politics (Bulkeley & Newell 2015). Largely determined by the division within political science between studies of the international arena on the one hand, seen as the domain of international relations, and studies of domestic politics on the other, regarded as the arena of political science proper, accounts of the climate change regime as the locus of climate politics were soon subject to critique (Newell and Paterson 1998; Paterson 1996). Adopting the language of governance, which was at the time gaining popularity across the social sciences, research began to analyse climate change politics through a set of different frames that regarded the global nature of the issue not in absolute terms but rather in relation to the globalising and networked nature of the economy and society. Such analyses began to explore the ways in which other scales and arenas of decision making came to matter in relation to climate change, the roles of non-state actors not only in shaping the actions of states and their international institutions but in responding to climate change on their own terms and the ways in which the governing of climate change extended beyond the specific policy domain of the international agreement and related to different economic spheres (Bulkeley & Newell 2015; Okereke et al. 2009). Far from being confined to the international activities of the state, global governance could include 'a vast array of rule systems that exercise authority in the pursuit of goals and that function outside normal national jurisdictions' (Rosenau 2000: 172). Consequently, the global governance of climate change encompassed 'all purposeful mechanisms and measures aimed at steering social systems towards preventing, mitigating, or adapting to the risks posed by climate change' (Jagers & Stripple 2003: 385).

During the 2000s, a burgeoning literature emerged tracing and analysing the global governance of climate change through multiple domains, levels and arenas of decision making, actors and institutions (for reviews, see Biermann & Pattberg 2008; Bulkeley & Newell 2015; Newell et al.

2012). Yet freed from the confines of the international sphere and state-based institutions, what constituted global climate governance appeared rather hard to pin down, leading to protests that 'such all-encompassing definitions hardly leave room for anything that is not global governance' (Biermann & Pattberg 2008: 279). Rather than global climate governance being an amorphous concept, Biermann and Pattberg (2008: 279) suggest that it is the 'distinct *qualities* of current world politics, such as non-hierarchical steering modes and the inclusion of private actors, both for profit and nonprofit' (emphasis added), that should be taken to epitomise global (environmental) governance. As they go on to elaborate, global environmental governance is in this reading taken to be a new phenomenon characterised by three particular features:

> . . . first, the emergence of new types of agency and of actors in addition to national governments, the traditional core actors in international environmental politics; second, the emergence of new mechanisms and institutions of global environmental governance that go beyond traditional forms of state-led, treaty-based regimes; and third, increasing segmentation and fragmentation of the overall governance system across levels and functional spheres (Biermann & Pattberg 2008: 280).

It is these features and their dynamics that lend governance a different set of qualities to its counterpart, usually taken to be traditional forms of state-based regulation or government. As Newell et al. (2012: 373) elaborate with regard to the role of non-state actors, it is not the presence of so many actors in the arenas of global environmental governance per se that matters but rather their ability 'to effectively steer particular aspects of the world political system in certain directions'. These features of global environmental governance – as multi-actor, multimodal and fragmented – are frequently read as emerging from the changing nature of the global economy and concomitant shifts in the nature of power and authority amongst different actors and institutions (Hoffmann 2011). The reach and legitimacy of the state are interpreted as waning in the face of the complexity of global governance challenges, creating the need to engage new actors and new modes of governing that in turn reflect 'shifts in the distribution of power and resources in the global political economy: trends toward the growing power of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with transnational networks . . . trends toward urbanization . . . and the power of transnational capital in conditions of globalization' (Newell et al. 2012: 366).

These arguments, and others like them, have led to a growing interest in a host of forms of climate change governance that lie beyond the traditional remit of the state and international regimes, from transnational networks to cities; to the role of private authorities, including both corporate and environmental organisations; and to community-based organisations (Bulkeley & Newell 2015). For some, however, this interest in the 'new' climate governance has gone too far, for in the 'rush to study new forms of governing ''beyond'', ''below'' and ''outside'' the state-dominated climate regime', the critical role of the state in providing a source of governance innovation in this domain is being neglected (Jordan & Hutimea 2014: 388; see also Biermann & Dingwerth 2004). Certainly, much of the research on climate governance can appear to be concentrated on arenas in which the state has only a shadowy presence. Yet this framing of climate governance as being either of one kind or another, of the state or non-state, in itself needs further critical examination. Both the 'old' and the 'new' debates on climate governance have a tendency to regard the state – and indeed other actors, institutions, scales, spheres of the social world and so on – as predetermined and discrete entities. Climate governance is here the sum of the parts – all of the mechanisms and measures being used to steer societies in response to climate change (Jagers & Stripple 2003). In this manner, climate change governance effectively describes a set of actors, institutions, arrangements, interventions and instruments that together – because of their distinct qualities – can be taken to represent the governance of a particular domain that we have come to know as climate change. Turf wars may ensue within this field as to the proper interpretation of the role of different actors (state vs. non-state), authority (public vs. private) and scale of decision making (global vs. national vs. local), but on the whole, climate change governance is understood as pertaining to these largely social responses to a set of biophysical or material conditions of the changing composition and functioning of the climate system.

From this perspective, the tendency amongst analysts has been to ask things *of* climate governance. How effective might one or other arrangement be? What are the means by which innovations can be spread? How legitimate are the actors involved? In what ways can the transparency of decision-making processes be improved? These are indeed laudable questions and have come to be more prominent as social scientists have been tasked with becoming more involved in the design and implementation of

solutions to the climate problem. Yet in focusing analysis on these dimensions of governance, questions *about* governance have often been strangely neglected. For example, much of the debate, on both sides of the state/non-state divide, tends to operate with a conception of the state as a reified 'thing: a more or less unified entity' (Painter 2006: 754) which then 'interacts with', 'intervenes in', 'depends upon' or 'regulates' other distinct social spheres such as 'the economy'[or] 'civil society' (Painter 2006: 753). Shifts in the nature of authority and its fragmentation have largely then been interpreted in zero-sum terms as if the gain of one actor is a loss to another (Bulkeley & Schroeder 2012; Sending & Neumann 2006), without further interrogation as to how the state and non-state might be conceived differently. Likewise, when it comes to the shifting geographies and fragmented politics of climate change governance, 'for all this talk of a redistribution or shift in capabilities between the different levels of governance ... the vocabulary of power is still one of capabilities "held" and the dispersion or distribution of powers between various levels and sites of authority' (Allen 2004: 22). A critical engagement with climate change governance requires that, rather than taking the nature of the entities and arrangements through which it is conducted for granted, these are opened to scrutiny. This is not only a matter of asking how, why, by and for whom climate change is governed, but of interrogating how what it means to govern is constituted in relation to climate change.

Accomplishing Governance

The starting point for a more critical engagement with the governance of climate change has been to regard governance not as a set of actors and institutions, but in terms of the specific modes of power through which governing is conducted and the processes and practices through which this takes place. Early work in the climate change field in this vein came from the neo-Gramscian tradition of political economy and its concern with the intimate relations amongst the state, private actors and civil society (Levy & Egan 1998; Levy & Newell 2005; Newell & Paterson 1998). Rather than regarding the state as a bounded entity, neatly cleaved from other spheres of the social world, such a perspective entails a notion of the state as a system of 'strategic selectivity' (Jessop 2002) in which it is composed of 'all institutions which enable the dominant social groups to exercise power, whether formally public or private, as components of the

state's institutional ensemble' (McGuirk 2004: 1022). Such perspectives have been central to developing our understanding of the ways in which climate change has come to be governed and the political economies of the workings of, for example, carbon markets, offset certification and corporate social responsibility. Yet whilst the boundaries between the state/non-state and public/private are troubled by the critical political economy perspective, there remains a sense that these are definite areas of the social world whose boundaries can be readily charted. Moreover, the power to govern is concentrated in the hands of elites, operating as a resource or capacity for some to wield over others and universalised so as to be of the same nature whatever the matter at hand.

There are, however, other ways of conceiving of the nature and workings of power that open up the questions of its mobilisation, politics and geographies in different ways. Whilst it is often taken for granted that power is 'an instrument of domination, a capacity of some resourceful mix' (Allen 2010: 2899), alternative approaches stress instead that power is facilitative, 'generated by the application of resources and skills over tracts of space and time' (Allen 2010: 2900; see also Barnett & Duvall 2005; Lipschutz 2005), and immanent, 'inseparable from its effects' (Allen 2003: 65). Moreover, as has long been recognised in political science, 'the currency of power is not the same for all relations' (Hurd 1999: 379). In his sustained engagement with the geographies of power, John Allen (2003, 2004, 2010) has shown that power takes different modalities, from domination and coercion, to authority, seduction, inducement and so on, in turn requiring that we attend to the 'distinctive characteristics and circumscribed consequences' (Allen 2003: 117) of its orchestration. What such accounts suggest is that the distinct qualities of governance as a social (and material) relation come not from the actors and institutions, or indeed structures, involved but from the particular modalities of power at work. Governance is not all-encompassing – some relations are of a different nature – but its distinctiveness is to be found in the ways in which power, conceived here in facilitative and immanent terms, is orchestrated and contested.

Foucault's concept of governmentality provides an important means through which to conceive of the orchestration, processes and practices of governing (Miller & Rose 1990; Stripple & Bulkeley 2014). Regarded as one mode of power, operating in the modern state alongside sovereignty and discipline (Foucault 2009: 105), the art of government is understood

as the 'the conduct of conduct', 'modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people' (Foucault 2000a: 341). Rather than seeking to secure particular territories or control individuals, government seeks to 'improve the condition of the population, to increase its wealth, longevity and its health' (Foucault, 2009: 105). This 'will to improve the condition of the population, is expansive' and tends to encompass multiple spheres of social life (Li 2007a: 5–6). The 'will to improve' (Li 2007a) can take multiple forms in different domains of the population but is achieved through orchestrating, or conducting, the everyday actions, or conduct, of individuals. Governmentality, in turn, is regarded as 'the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power' (Foucault 2009: 108).

The notion of governmentality has been subject to multiple interpretations across the social sciences. Partly because of its fragmented treatment in Foucault's own work but also because of the nature of his approach, any definitive interpretation is rather elusive. For William Walters (2012: 45), rather than simply applying the concept, what is required is a critical encounter with the set of openings provided by the notion of governmentality: 'rather than a set of arguments to be endlessly rehashed or interpreted, hidden meanings or references to be uncovered, we can relate to it as something to be used, adapted, set to work in grappling with problems'. For the purposes of understanding the processes and practices of governing advanced in this book, three such encounters are especially productive. First, governing is not seen as a set of discourses or techniques that are applied to a particular problem area, but rather the field of intervention – what it is that should be governed and how this should be done – is itself constituted through the process of governing. The working of government as a mode of power entails constituting a particular will to improve in relation amongst broad political rationalities, such as neoliberalism; the problematisation of particular conditions of the population; and a set of practices, techniques or technologies of government that are 'not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies' but also 'up to a point, possess their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and "reason"' (Foucault 2000b: 225). The ensemble of these rationalities and techniques, and the particular governmentality they form, has variously been termed an apparatus (Walters 2012),